Research Proposal of the Thesis Entitled

Product diversification in Aari embroidery of urban Ahmedabad units

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by

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Introduction

In the current times aari embroidery is the most prominent technique in the bridal fashion market in India.

A huge number of artisans skilled in this craft has shifted from their rural homes, to urban metropolises and has started their small units, where they take job work orders from smaller designer labels. This has been ongoing for the past 20 years since the advent of organized fashion industry in India, yet the socio economic status of these artisans have not improved much in this period, whereas the fashion industry they supply to has grown manifold.

This research aims at making these artisans of aari embroidery grow their economic output by the means of product diversification, done through conducting a paired study with the artisans working on the existing and newly designed products.

Review of Literature

The review of literature for this thesis spans through various aspects of the topic. It touches briefly upon the evolution of embroidered textiles in India, Aari embroidery as a technique, its significance in today's high fashion industry and the functioning of micro units of Aari embroidery in urban India. The review covers one of the most prominent embroidery craft used in high fashion, external and internal variables impacting the same and its artisans, the evolution and significance of the Aari embroidery, its micro units run by the artisans themselves.

- Crafts have an essential role in Indian culture. People's creative talents, showing both form and function, have been displayed via a diverse range of crafts around the country. Today, craft may be both a form of industrial production and a sort of art.

- It has been an important commodity in global trade and economy from the beginning of time, in addition to having various cultural and aesthetic representations.

- Aari embroidery has been a predominant craft in traditional Indian textiles since the mughal period of 12th Century India and currently this forms a major technique of the surface design in Indian Couture. Once donned by the country's rulers, the patterns would always shine out, on the sheen of silk and the softness of velvet. The art of aari embroidery has gone a long way from its regal days, with Persian designs entrancing the clothes and commodities producing a sheen of wealth and elegance.

- Mitra, A. Aggarwal, R. Iyer, M (1996) studied the shifting vocations of traditional artisans following interview menthouts and the outcome reveals changes towards professions with better pay. This research needs to study how to increase pay in their traditional craft itself in the current scenario from a direction taken from here.

- Bhatia, R (2005) studied in detail on zardozi as an embroidery following numerous statistical and interview methods. Outcomes reveal the current status of its artisans and market of Zardozi, the demand is in decline, being replaced by aari. Thus a combined use of aari and zardozi can be studied further, along with the effect of current visual trends in traditional zardozi/aari for this research.

- Gupta. T, (2012) researched the contribution of textile craft in Indian fashion following descriptive research, and outcomes reveal fashion forerunners for both the local and international markets owe a great deal to Indian traditional textile techniques as raw material for fashion. Fashion may be described as anything that people accept at a specific period and location. Textile craft has been a key contributor to fashion in India for ages and continues to be so now.

- Chamikutty. P (2013) studied the emergence of social businesses in the handicraft sector using case studies. Outcomes reveal that social businesses have a greater incentive to bring in efficiencies in quality control and production management, which are often lacking in non profit organizations are the key results of the study. How social business can be effective for aari embroidery specifically where the artisans do not belong to a particular segment of society needs to be studied further for this research.

- Emmett. D, (2015) studied the collaborations between skilled, traditional textile artisans

in India and foreign textile and fashion designers from the artisans following experimental and interview methods, and outcomes reveal artisans' perspective and their viewpoints of their craft industry in contemporary times. She talks about Amartya Sen, an economist who emphasizes social values in economic development, providing a capabilities model that appeared useful in distinguishing capability acquisition from entrepreneurial application. For Sen, an important objective of development is maximizing people's capabilities, the freedom to pursue the kinds of lives they value. Sen defined capability as a combination of "functionings" or the various "doings and beings" that leads to well-being. Functionings range from elementary (nourishment, health) to complex (self respect, social integration) and vary within different local cultures.' This forms an integral part of this research which sheds light on entrepreneurial necessity for sustenance of artisans.

- Kuldova. T, (2016) studied Indian high fashion industry with a major objective of social analysis following the interview method and the outcome revealed that Indian weddings have transformed into a platform for wearing the most luxurious clothing by the elites in India wherein most of the traditional crafts are visible. Embroidery being the most prominent royal craft it is predominantly seen in these couture products. The main style in Indian couture is 'royal chic, a fashion that re-imagines current India via emblems of its past glory, which is projected on the imagined canvas of India's future. The trend's defining element is an artistic reinterpretation of aristocratic aesthetics from bygone centuries, from the Rajputs to the Mughal Empire and beyond, allowing the modern commercial elite to reinvent themselves as a neo-aristocratic class within the putative Indian democracy. Investigations of the Indian luxury fashion market's dependence on the production of thousands of artisans all over India, reveals a complex system of hierarchies and exploitation, and helps us understand the perspective of elite consumers of high fashion as well. This gives numerous leads to the research and points out the existence of lack of awareness, education and organizational structure as a major reason for dependance of artisans only on job work and lack of entrepreneurial capabilities.

- Ranavaade. V. P. and Karolia. A, (2016) studied the bridal costume market in India in the current scenario with the major objective being revival of traditionalism in the same, mainly following interview method. One of the results talks about how embroidery is an integral part of the same. The interaction of the Indian Fashion System with Indian

society is inherent and displays itself via the epicenter of Indian culture's main institution of marriage. Marriage in Indian society is about the union of two families, not just the couple, and as a result has numerous dynamic socioeconomic and occasionally political undercurrents. The traditions and ceremonies of a traditional Indian wedding last many days, with specific indications for a clothing code that is common in most groups and has few changes. In Hindu tradition, the sari represented femininity, hence growing up was marked by a change from a skirt-blouse (Ghagra-choli) to a more mature clothing; the sari.

- Shah. A and Patel. R, (2016) studied the effect of E-Commerce in artisan run businesses following statistical methods and outcomes show the benefits of the same. For this research how e-commerce can help specific skills like aari embroidery is the direction that needs to be studied.

- In an interview by Border and Fall (2017) with Gudda Prasad, Artisan, ARDY 2M Design Studio, Mumbai, he said that - 'we feel sad that karigar work might end but the responsibility lies with big people like my boss and the merchants. They should realize that if karigars are leaving this profession, why and what are their problems? If the payment is like what is offered here, that's one thing, but if we are working for 12, 13, 14 hours and without timely payment nobody will want to continue. Our work involves a lot of imagination – our ideas depend on colors we see from photos that people bring.' This interview with an actual artisan enlightens us a lot on their perceptions, and how they are dependent on designers/consumers for both financial stability as well as inspiration/direction on what they want to work on.

Problem Statement

The problem statement of the research was identified by implementing a design thinking process to the larger context of Aari embroidery artisans needing to grow their business. The design thinking process has five stages: Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, Test, and with the context of this research, the empathize stage is used to generate the problem.

It can be empathized that Aari embroidery artisans who run their own unit are mainly dependent on job work orders by local sellers/designers/vendors for their revenue. These

orders are very much seasonal and fetch a very basic rate for them, where they can only cover basic labor costs.

These vendors have the capability to make products and directly sell in the market, even more with the advent of online portals like amazon kaarigar/flipkart samarth etc., but have always resisted to do so, giving rise to the problem statement behind this research.

Aim

To design a range of aari embroidered products that can be made and sold by the embroidery artisans themselves.

Objectives

1. To study the existing products in aari embroidery taken as job work orders by artisan run units in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.
2. To design and develop a range sellable aari embroidered product which the artisans can make within the embroidery frame.
3. To conduct a market acceptance survey for the designed range of products.

Rationale

The key rationale of the research is the reason for resistance in aari embroidery artisans for selling their products directly. One of the reasons for that has been that embroidery has only been a part of a finished product and they require association with other vendors like tailors, etc. to make their work into a finished product. Thereby arises the first research question - Can there be an aari embroidered product that can be finished in the frame itself, 100% by the artisans?

As of now unstitched garments like sarees/dupattas are a category yet they require a model for good photography, tailor for stitching borders etc.

Motivation

The motivation of this research would be, to explore the possibility of ideation, design & development of such a product range, and test the reaction/market value of the same amongst potential consumers.

To define the motivation further it can be said that there is a need to Design a range of aari embroidered products that can be finished directly on the frame and can be sold online by the artisans.

The motivation behind the same would also be to ideate and thus create new product ideas given the constraints in mind, research on such existing ones and develop new ideas that are more artisan friendly.

This will be followed by making prototypes of multiple products, developed by the artisans, should them and make the content upto the version where in they can be uploaded for selling online and test both the ease of making that product with the artisans, and feasibility of selling them with the consumers by the artisans.

Design thinking process have been implemented only to determine the problem statement, purpose and motivation of the research as above and the main methodology of the entire research have been developed separately.

Research Questions

1. Can there be an aari embroidered product that can be finished in the frame itself, 100% by the artisans?
2. If the same can be made, would the artisans be able to sell it directly by themselves?
3. How would the market react to such products?

Hypothesis

The research will mainly follow a hypothesis testing experimental method in which multiple categories of products will be designed and a paired study will be performed, to derive conclusions on the proposed hypothesis as follows.

H1:

New systematic approach in aari embroidery design might significantly change the income generated by its artisans.

H0:

New systematic approach in aari embroidery design might not significantly change the income generated by its artisans.

Methodology

1. Literature Review
2. Research Design

The experimental research design is divided in 3 phases as below:

PHASE 1 - Study of *Aari* Embroidery:

- *Aari* Embroidery, its use in modern fashion, its small set ups run by independent artisans in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.
- Selection of 5 embroidery units, employing more than 10 artisans each, in Ahmedabad, for the study. The existing products they take job work on currently will be studied.
- Study of hand embroidered unstitched existing products, along with new and emerging product categories in handcrafted products in aari embroidery, that can be made by the artisans themselves.

PHASE 2 - Design Development:

- Development of new designs of products that can be made within the frame by the Artisans themselves.
- Development of product ideas based on the new designs.
- The newly designed products will be mainly of two categories derived from the outcomes of phase 1.
- A total of 5 new products will be designed for each category.
- Selection of existing product ranges for a paired study.
- Identification of sample and determining sample size. Ideal sample size would be 5 different units (which are artisans of aari embroidery running smaller units in urban Ahmedabad) , each of which will be given 1m fabric on which 5 m will have the old designs and 5m new designs.

PHASE 3 - Market Acceptance Study:

- A brief market acceptance study will be conducted for the new designs, to generate data on sellability.

3. Data collection

- The method of data collection will be observations, case studies and interviews. The data collected will be represented in the form of documentation.

4. Analysis of Result
5. Hypothesis testing

- A paired study will be conducted with the sample for the research by making them work on the new designs, as well as their existing job work designs.
- The main data that would be collected for the processing will be various results from the paired study. Eg. Time taken, cost incurred, ease of making, and others while embroidering the designed products. The method being followed for the same would be cross-over trials (where individual artisans will be randomly assigned to one of two designs and then afterward assigned to the second design.)
- The data of the paired study will be analyzed to generate desired results, using Paired Sample t-test and represented statistically.

6. Final Documentation

Expected Outcomes

Phase 1 - Study of *Aari* Embroidery

Study of aari embroidery with key specifics to the topics set in phase 1.

Phase 2 - Design Development

Design development and conducting of paired study using new designs.

Phase 3 - Market Acceptance Study

Brief Market Acceptance Study on the newly made products, followed by submission of final thesis.

Delimitations

The study is delimited to aari embroidery artisans who run their own units or works as freelance job workers, and thus not including a percentage of artisans who are employed by the industry as an employee with organizations like design / export/production houses amongst others.

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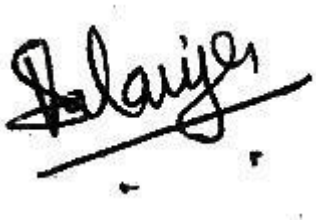

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